

## SUNRISE/SUNSET

5/16 5:22 a.m. 8:01 p.m.  
5/17 5:21 a.m. 8:02 p.m.  
5/18 5:20 a.m. 8:03 p.m.  
5/19 5:19 a.m. 8:04 p.m.  
5/20 5:18 a.m. 8:05 p.m.  
5/21 5:17 a.m. 8:06 p.m.  
5/22 5:17 a.m. 8:07 p.m.



# Nature

## Keeping the Peace

On Duxbury Beach, Piping Plovers and ORVs Have Learned to Get Along

By Laura Collins-Hughes

**O**n a sunny Saturday morning, Ryan Chandler makes his rounds at Duxbury Beach, checking to make sure that everyone is present and accounted for.

One of his stops brings him to a patch off the back road, where he steps gingerly as he approaches his charges. They are not glad to see him.

"The habitat (plovers) like is also the habitat people like."



On the road to Saquish, a pedestrian walks past a reminder of the endangered species that share the beach.

"He's gonna do a broken wing," Chandler says knowingly as a piping plover comes out to greet him. "He'll fake like he's hurt. See his wing? He'll start to make believe like he's hurt because he really wants to draw us out."

The tiny bird does exactly as Chandler predicts, dropping one wing down, looking injured as it walks away from its nest, trying to lead the humans from it. But Chandler, an environmental protection officer with the Duxbury Harbormaster/Coastal Natural Resource Department, knows exactly where the nest is, subtly marked with a couple of wooden stakes. It is, he says, a classic nest; the scrape, a shallow indentation in the sand, is lined with broken clam shells. Inside sit four pale green eggs speckled with black, almost indistinguishable from the pebbles



A piping plover on its nest, whose four eggs make it complete.



Duxbury environmental protection officer Ryan Chandler points to a plover nest, hidden among the rocks on Duxbury Beach.

us and said, "You're lucky to have it. Take care of it," he says. Taking care of a 4-mile-long barrier beach where endangered species, off-road vehicles, families and pets coexist is a complex

bles around them, about the same size as the miniature candy eggs that show up in Easter baskets.

"Not many people ever see a nest," Chandler says. "We try and make sure of that."

It is a challenge the harbormaster's office took up in 1991, the same year the Halloween storm changed Duxbury Beach forever. For Harbormaster Donald Beers, that storm was a reminder of how precious the beach is — as a barrier to the sea, as a natural resource, as a place simply to enjoy.

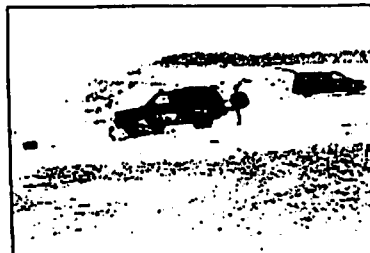
"Mother Nature tapped

responsibility requiring the cooperation of environmentalists, ORV operators and everyone else who comes to the beach. At this time of year, as the plovers are nesting and the people are drawn outside on warm days, it is a particularly tricky proposition.

"The habitat (plovers) like is also the habitat people like," Chandler explains. "They like sandy blowouts."

At the moment, four pairs of the endangered plovers are known to be nesting at Duxbury Beach. Chandler checks them every morning, making sure his numbers are right, watching for the fourth egg that makes a nest complete. He knows that 28 days after that last egg drops, the chicks will hatch, some of them perilously close to where people walk and drive and romp with their dogs. The areas where nests are known to be are cordoned off now, and larger sections of beach will be closed when the eggs hatch.

They like sandy blowouts — Ryan Chandler



During the summertime, Duxbury Beach is lined with vehicles, but parking is easy to come by at this time of year.

move to follow the plovers, and drivers on the road to Saquish may find themselves stopped in traffic, at the order of Beers or one of his employees, until a plover family crosses the road.

Balancing the protection of endangered species with access for people and vehicles is something that has eluded many other towns, notably on Cape Cod, where environmentalists and ORV enthusiasts have waged bitter battles over stretches of sand. Beers, who works with the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the state

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environmental police. Duxbury Beach Reservation, the Massachusetts Beach Buggy Association and other groups to keep the peace at Duxbury Beach, is acutely aware of that. He knows that if the cooperation breaks down, federal and state officials would probably come in and close the beach so the wildlife could live undisturbed.

"Everybody comes to Duxbury and asks, 'How do you do it? How do you do it?' It's very simple. You just do it. You just communicate," Beers says. "The war between the two sides is just not necessary. It's just not necessary. There has to be an understanding of what's important. There has to be compromise. With those two in place,

you'll have success."

And, Chandler says, the level of protection plovers get on Duxbury Beach is a direct result of the money collected from the people who use it.

"It works both ways," he says. "People do impact the beach, but their use of the beach contributes to more protection than most people can afford to

do."

Beers says the people of Duxbury, and regular users of the beach from outside the town, know well what is expected of them and willingly comply, Chandler agrees.

"They don't mind following the rules," he says. "They just want to know why there's a fence there."